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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

4 January 1974

MEMORANDUM FOR USIB PRINCIPALS

SUBJECT: Intelligence Leaks

1. In recent weeks there have been a number of instances in which highly classified material has appeared in the press. In some situations these reflected a conscious release of information about world developments by senior officials of our Government. Such cases are quite appropriate in view of the necessity to inform the American people of developments in conformity with our American constitutional structure.
2. In some instances, however, the revelations have gone into detail as to intelligence sources and methods well beyond senior officials' releases and have apparently originated from independent release of the information without authorization. While it is clear that information will and must be made available to the public by authorized levels of the U.S. Government, it is equally important that the Intelligence Community take steps to protect sensitive intelligence sources and methods. Such unauthorized revelations can:
 - a. Threaten the safety and welfare of individuals who may be providing us intelligence at a substantial personal risk.
 - b. Permit the identification of our sources and their consequent termination.
 - c. Lead other nations to make substantial changes in procedures which terminate our access to information now being collected.
 - d. Produce substantial diplomatic and political difficulties in our foreign relations.
3. A number of actions have been taken to close this gap in the security of the Intelligence Community. Personal representation by previous Directors backed by strong expressions of Presidential concern have been made. You have established security guides which, if scrupulously followed, should reduce the number of inadvertent disclosures and limit damage from deliberate leaks. These actions have had some success, but in the final analysis the solution to the leak problem rests with the individuals at all levels who have authorized access to classified materials.

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4. The responsibility for protection of foreign intelligence sources and methods requires a personal commitment. It requires the individual to take upon himself the responsibility to ensure the integrity of the privileged information with which he is entrusted. It requires that the individual accept the general and fundamental concept that one individual cannot assume responsibility independent of proper authority for deciding what should and what should not be revealed. It requires use of established procedures when release of intelligence seems indicated for whatever reason.

5. I ask the Members of the Board to make these comments known to all individuals with access to our intelligence materials. I also request that you remind them of the guidelines and procedures to be followed for the authorized release of intelligence and encourage their full utilization.


W. E. Colby
Director of Central Intelligence

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